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cont.

Field of the Invention--.

Page 1, before line 10, insert

--Background of the Invention--.

Page 3, before line 23, insert

--Summary of the Invention--.

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Amended) [Process] In a process for the preparation of lactams comprising 6 to 12 carbon atoms from the corresponding cycloalkanone oximes by rearrangement according to the Beckmann reaction in the presence of acid, [characterized in that use is made of] the improvement wherein said acid comprises methanesulphonic acid.

Claim 2, Line 1: Delete "Process" and insert --A process--.
Line 2: Delete "characterized in that" and insert --wherein--; delete "used".

Claim 3, Line 1: Delete "Process" and insert --A process--.
Line 2: Delete "characterized in that" and insert --wherein--.

4. (Amended) [Process] A process according to [one of Claims 1 to 3, characterized in that] Claim 1, wherein the [strength by weight of the] methanesulphonic acid is of a strength by weight of between 70 and 90%.

5. (Amended) [Process] A process according to [one of Claims 1 to 4, characterized in that] Claim 1, wherein the reaction is carried out at a temperature of between 120 and 180°C.

6. (Amended) [Process] A process according to [one of Claims 1 to 5, characterized in that] Claim 1, wherein the reaction is carried out with stirring which exhibits a Reynolds number of greater than 10,000.

Please add the following new claims:

--7. A process according to Claim 3, the methanesulphonic acid is of a strength by weight of between 70 and 90%.

8. A process according to Claim 2, wherein the reaction is carried out at a temperature of between 120 and 180°C.

9. A process according to Claim 2, wherein the reaction is carried out with stirring which exhibits a Reynolds number of greater than 10,000.

10. A process according to Claim 5, wherein the reaction is carried out with stirring which exhibits a Reynolds number of greater than 10,000.

11. A process according to Claim 1, for preparing lauryllactam.

12. A process according to Claim 1, for preparing caprolactam.

13. A process according to Claim 8, for preparing lauryllactam.

14. A process according to Claim 9, for preparing lauryllactam.

15. A process according to Claim 10, for preparing lauryllactam.--